VIII
WORLD CYCLES WHEN BUDDHAS APPEAR

CONTENTS

1. Buddhist Timescale

In the Buddhist system of timescale, the word "***kappa***" meaning "cycle or aeon" is used to denote certain time-periods that repeat themselves in **cyclical order**. Four time-cycles are distinguished; a great aeon (*maha-kappa*), an incalculable aeon (*asankheyya-kappa*), an included aeon (*antara-kappa*) and a lifespan (*ayu-kappa*).

2. Great Aeon or World Cycle (*Maha-kappa*)

A *maha kappa* or aeon is generally taken to mean a **world cycle**. How long is a world cycle? In *Samyutta* ii, Chapter XV, the Buddha used the parables of the hill and mustard-seed for comparison:

- Suppose there was a solid mass, of rock or hill, one *yojana* (eight miles) wide, one *yojana* across and one *yojana* high and every hundred years, a man was to stroke it once with a piece of silk. That mass of rock would be worn away and ended sooner than would an aeon.
- Suppose there was a city of iron walls, one *yojana* in length, one *yojana* in width, one *yojana* high and filled with mustard-seeds to the brim. There-from a man was to take out every hundred years a mustard-seed. That great pile of mustard-seed would be emptied and ended sooner than would an aeon.

<u>How long in time has been the succession of aeons in the past</u>?

According to the Buddha: *"So long, brother, is an aeon. And of aeons thus long more than one has passed, more than a hundred have passed, more than a thousand, more than a hundred thousand. How is this? Incalculable is the beginning, brother, of this faring on. The earliest point is not revealed of the running on, the faring on, of beings cloaked in ignorance, tied to craving."*

3. Incalculable Aeon or Epoch (*Asankheyya-kappa*)

According to *Anguttara* ii, 142, there are four periods called **incalculable epochs** (*asankheyya-kappa*) within a great aeon or world cycle (*maha-kappa*). The duration of each of these epochs cannot be enumerated even by taking hundreds of thousands (*lakhs*) of years as a unit, hence the name "incalculable aeon". These four incalculable epochs are:

(i) **Enveloping Epoch** – **period of destruction** or dissolution of the world system. In the Sun Discourse (*Anguttara* iv, 99), the Buddha described the destruction of the world by fire that even reaches the realm of Great *Brahma*. It commences with the falling of the great rain and terminates with the extinction of flames if the world system is to be dissolved by fire; or the receding of floods if dissolved by water; or the cessation of storms if dissolved by air. An elaborate description of the dissolution of the world by fire, water or the air element is given in the chapter on the recollection of past life in the *Visuddhi Magga* or Path of Liberation.

(ii) **Enveloped Epoch** – period when the world system is **completely destroyed** or in a **state of void**. This is the period beginning from the moment of dissolution of the world by fire, water or the air element till the falling of the great rain that heralds the evolution of a new world.

(iii) **Developing Epoch** – period of **evolution.** This is the period beginning from the falling of the great rain that heralds the evolution of a new world to the appearance of the sun, moon, stars and planets.

(iv) **Developed Epoch** – period of **continuance** after having been reinstated. This is the period beginning from the appearance of the sun, moon, stars and planets to the falling of the great rain that heralds the dissolution of the world.

Explanation of Lifespan in First, Second & Third *Jhana* Planes

- Regarding the destruction of the world by the **three great elements**, **fire** destroys the world up to the three planes of the First *Jhana*. According to the commentators, the maximum lifespan in the First *Jhana* planes is 1 incalculable epoch because these planes exist only during one epoch, the developed epoch.

- After being destroyed seven times consecutively by fire, the world will be destroyed by **water** on the eighth time when the destruction reaches the three planes of the **Second *Jhana***. Hence the maximum lifespan in the Second *Jhana* planes is 8 world cycles.

- After being destroyed in regular cycles seven times by fire and once by water, the world will be destroyed by **wind** on the 64^{th} time when the destruction reaches the **Third *Jhana* planes.** Hence the maximum lifespan in the Third *Jhana* planes is 64 world cycles.

What is the cause of destruction and evolution of the world?

In the Manual of Cosmic Order, the Venerable Mahathera Ledi Sayadaw writes: "Without a known beginning, and without end, the world or physical universe continues the same whether world-lords or supreme beings (*issara*) appear or not. Not made, not created by any such, not even a hundred, not even a thousand, not even a hundred thousand world-lords would be able to remove it. By the **law of heat** (*utu niyama*), by the **law of natural causation** (*dhamma niyama*), the order of the physical universe is maintained."

4. Included Aeon or Era (*Antara-kappa*)

During the developed epoch, human lifespan can increase or decrease depending on their morality. When morality is on the rise, human lifespan increases till it reaches an exceedingly great age of **80,000 years** at the **peak of human morality**. When immorality prevails, human lifespan decreases till it reaches a minimum of **10 years** at the **base of human bestiality**. Details of these two periods of increase and decrease in the human lifespan are found in *the Cakkavati-Sihananda Sutta* of the *Digha Nikaya*.

The duration of one cycle in which the lifespan of humans rises from ten years to an exceeding great age and then falls to ten years again is called an ***antara-kappa***, an **included era**.

How long is an included era?

In the Manual of Cosmic Order, the Venerable Ledi Sayadaw used the sands of the Ganges for comparison: "If a man were to count the number of years by the grains of sand, picked up one by one from one league of the Ganges, the sands would be exhausted sooner than the years of one included era were all counted."

At the completion of **64 included eras**, the **developed epoch** comes to an end. Since there are no living beings (in human and celestial realms) during the other three epochs, they are not reckoned in terms of included eras. But as all four incalculable epochs are of the same duration, the Commentaries equate **one incalculable epoch** (*asankheyya-kappa*) with **64 included eras** (*antara-kappa*).

In some Pali Texts, one incalculable epoch is quoted as containing either **64 or 20 included eras.** This is because there is another type of included era reckoned in terms of the lifespan in Avici Hell that is **one-eightieth** of a world cycle or **one-twentieth** of an incalculable epoch. In this way, we can assume that one incalculable epoch is equal to 64 included eras of human beings or 20 included eras of Avici hell beings.

5. Human Lifespan (*Ayu Kappa*)

The Pali word "***ayu-kappa***" literally means lifecycle or **lifespan**. If the lifespan is 100 years, then an *ayu kappa* is one century; if lifespan is 1000 years, an *ayu kappa* is one millennium. When the Buddha said, "Ananda, I have developed the four *Iddhipadas* (bases of psychic power). If I so desire, I can live either a whole ***kappa*** or a little more than a *kappa*", the *kappa* should be taken to mean *ayu-kappa*, the lifespan of humans, which was 100 years during that period. This is the interpretation provided by the Commentaries on the statement of the Buddha taken from the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*.

6. World Cycles when Buddhas Appear (*Buddha Kappa*)

An aeon or world cycle in which there is no Buddha is called a *suñña kappa* (empty or void aeon). An aeon in which one or more Buddhas appear is called a Buddha *kappa*. By the word *kappa* standing alone, a *Maha-kappa* is meant. There are five types of Buddha *kappas*, namely:

- *Sara-kappa* in which one Buddha appears
- *Manda-kappa* in which two Buddhas appear
- *Vara-kappa* in which three Buddhas appear
- *Saramanda-kappa* in which four Buddhas appear
- *Bhadda-kappa* in which five Buddhas appear

The present *kappa* is a *Bhadda* (auspicious) *kappa*; of its five Buddhas, four have appeared, namely: Kakusandha, Konagamana, Kassapa and Gotama (Sakyamuni), the fifth Mettaya has yet to appear. The interval of time that elapses between one Buddha *kappa* and the next can vary from one *kappa* to one *asankheyya* of *kappas*.

'***Asankheyya***' literally means **'innumerable'** while Childers' Pali Dictionary defines *asankheyya* as the highest of the numerals $\mathbf{10^{140}}$ or 1 followed by 140 zeros! An *asankheyya* of *kappas*, $\mathbf{10^{140}}$ or

innumerable number of world cycles is a mind-boggling time period that defies the imagination! It should not be confused with *asankheyya-kappa*, which is just ¼ of a *kappa*. Our Lord Buddha Gotama received his confirmation when as the hermit Sumedha, he made his aspiration to become a Supreme Buddha at the feet of Dipankara Buddha, four *asankheyyas* of *kappas* and one hundred thousand *kappas* ago. Since then there have been 11 Buddha *kappas*, the present one being the eleventh.

7. Twenty Four Buddhas Preceding Lord Gotama Buddha

It should not be construed that there were no Buddha *kappas* before that of Dipankara Buddha or that no more Buddhas will arise after the present *kappa*. The numbers of Buddhas who have come and gone in the past, or who will come and go in the future, are as countless as the sands of the Ganges. The names of the twenty-four Buddhas who preceded our Lord Gotama beginning from Lord Dipankara and time intervals are listed below.

- 4 *asankheyyas* of *kappas* + 100,000 *kappas* ago: **Tanhankara, Medhankara, Saranankara, Dipankara**

- 3 *asankheyyas* of *kappas* + 100,000 *kappas* ago: **Kondanna**

- 2 *asankheyyas* of *kappas* + 100,000 *kappas* ago: **Mangala, Sumana, Revata, Sobhita**

- 1 *asankheyya* of *kappas* + 100,000 *kappas* ago: **Anomadassin, Paduma, Narada**

- 100,000 *kappas* ago: **Padumuttara**

- 30,000 *kappas* ago: **Sumedha, Sujata**

- 18,000 *kappas* ago: **Piyadassin, Atthadassin, Dhammadassin**
- 94 *kappas* ago: **Siddhattha**
- 92 *kappas* ago: **Tissa, Phussa**
- 91 *kappas* ago: **Vipassin**
- 31 *kappas* ago: **Sikhin, Vessabhu**
- Present *kappa*: **Kakusandha, Konagamana, Kassapa, Gotama**

8. Eight Qualifications of a *Bodhisatta* (Future Buddha)

Let alone becoming a Supremely Enlightened Buddha, even the stage of development of one to receive the prophecy of Buddhahood and be confirmed as a *Bodhisatta* or Future Buddha, can be realized only when one is endowed with eight qualifications, namely:

(i) Must be a human being
(ii) Must be a male person
(iii) Must have fulfilled all conditions such as Perfections necessary for realization of *Arahantship* in that very life.
(iv) Must meet with a living Buddha.
(v) Must be a *Kammavadi* ascetic (one who believes in the Law of *Kamma*) or a member of the community of *bhikkhus* during the dispensation of a Buddha.
(vi) Must be endowed with *jhana* attainments
(vii) Act of merit i.e. must be prepared to lay down his life for the sake of the Buddha.
(viii) Must possess wholesome desire (*chanda*) strong enough to aspire after Buddhahood even though he fully knows that he has to suffer much through repeated births, even in woeful states, to reach the ultimate goal.

Only those who are endowed with these eight qualifications are eligible to receive the *Niyata Vivaranam* or definite assurance of becoming a Buddha. Even when as a *Bodhisatta*, it is so difficult to receive the prophecy of Buddhahood, what can be said of Buddhahood itself, which takes a minimum time of four *asankheyyas* and a *lakh of kappas* for the future Buddha to develop the Perfections to their highest levels without any regard for even own his life!

Why does a *Bodhisatta* aspire to become a Buddha, which is so difficult, when he can easily obtain Enlightenment for himself?

It is because of his Great Compassion (*Mahakaruna*). "*What is the use of crossing over alone, being a man aware of my strength? Having reached Omniscience (as a Buddha), I will cause the world together with the devas to cross over.*" (Chronicle of Buddhas I, 56)

9. Length of Time to Cultivate the Perfections (*Paramis*)

"***Paramo***" means highest and is used to designate a *Bodhisatta* because he is the highest of being, endowed with extraordinary virtues of *dana, sila,* etc. Although he has the ability to attain *Arahantship* in that very life, yet he **chooses to postpone** it in order to gain Supreme Enlightenment out of **Great Compassion** to save others by teaching them the way to escape from the cycle of *Samsara*.

The ten noble qualities, which the *Bodhisatta* has to practise and fulfill for an enormous period of time, are called the **Ten *Paramis*** or Perfections. According to the Commentaries, once a person has been confirmed as a *Bodhisatta* (future Buddha), he has to fulfill the ten *Paramis* or Perfections, namely: (i) ***Dana*** (generosity) (ii) ***Sila*** (morality) (iii) ***Nekkhama*** (renunciation) (iv) ***Panna*** (wisdom) (v) ***Viriya*** (effort) (vi) ***Khanti*** (patience) (vii) ***Sacca*** (truthfulness) (viii) ***Adhitthana*** (resolution) (ix) ***Metta*** (loving-kindness) (x) ***Upekkha*** (equanimity).

Fulfilling the above perfections by sacrificing one's external properties is called ordinary perfections (***Parami***). Fulfilling them by sacrificing one's limbs and other organs of the body is called middle perfections (***Upaparami***). Fulfilling them by sacrificing even one's life is called highest perfections (***Paramattha-Parami***). Thus the ten perfections in three grades give thirty perfections.

For Lord Gotama Buddha, the minimum period of time required to accomplish the ten *Paramis* was 4 *asankheyyas* of *kappas* + 100,000 *kappas*. The 4 *asankheyyas* of *kappas* should not be construed as one continuous period but as **4 separate intervals of Buddha-*kappas*** between Lord Dipankara Buddha and Lord Padumuttara Buddha. According to the Commentary, the period of time to fulfill the *Paramis* depends on the type of *Bodhisatta.* This is because different *Bodhisattas* have **different levels of maturity** although they all possess the eight qualifications of a *Bodhisatta*. The three types of *Bodhisattas* are:

(i) ***Pannadhika*** or **wisdom** predominant *Bodhisatta* is one with the factor of predominant wisdom always present in his endeavours and becomes a Buddha after fulfilling the Perfections for 4 *asankheyyas* and 100,000 world cycles.

(ii) ***Saddhadhika*** or **faith** predominant *Bodhisatta* is one who relies more on faith rather than wisdom in his endeavours and becomes a Buddha after fulfilling the Perfections for 8 *asankheyyas* and 100,000 world cycles.

(iii) ***Viriyadhika*** or **effort** predominant *Bodhisatta* is one who relies solely in his own effort, placing less emphasis on faith or wisdom, in his endeavours and becomes a Buddha after fulfilling the Perfections for 16 *asankheyyas* and 100,000 world cycles.

It must be emphasized that these 3 designations apply to *Bodhisattas* only. Once they become Supremely Enlightened Buddhas, they are **all identical** in respect of Wisdom, Faith and Energy. One cannot say which Buddha is more accomplished than the other in each of these aspects.

10. Reasons for the Differences in Time to Fulfill *Paramis*

Concerning the reasons for the different length of time necessary to fulfill the *Paramis*, the **Commentator Dhammapala** and others are of the opinion that the difference in duration is due to the different **degrees of maturity** of Perfections among the different *Bodhisattas*. They explained that at the time of receiving the definite prophecy from a Buddha, the *Bodhisattas* are of three different human types:

(i) ***Ugghatittanu Bodhisatta***
(ii) ***Vipancittanu Bodhisatta***
(iii) ***Neyya Bodhisatta.***

All three types of *Bodhisattas* have the capacity to attain *Arahantship* together with the six ***Abhinnas*** (**Note 1**) and ***Patisambhida Nana*** (**Note 2**) if they wish to achieve the enlightenment of a Disciple in that very life. However they differ in the speed of attainment because they belong to **three different types** of individuals or ***puggala*** **(Note 3**).

With ***Uggatittanu Bodhisattas***, the degree of maturity of their Perfections leading to enlightenment is **so strong** that they have to practise only **4 *asankheyyas*** and 100,000 world cycles to accomplish the Perfections. With ***Vipancittanu Bodhisattas***, the degree of maturity of their Perfections is **medial** and they have to practise **8 *asankheyyas*** and 100,000 world cycles to accomplish the Perfections. With ***Neyya Bodhisattas***, the degree of maturity of their Perfections is weak and so they have to practise **16 *asankheyyas*** and 100,000 world cycles to accomplish the Perfections. To sum up:

- *Uggatittanu Bodhisattas* are identified with *Pannadhika Bodhisattas* (Wisdom predominant).
- ***Vipancittanu*** *Bodhisattas* are identified with ***Saddhadhika*** *Bodhisattas* (Faith predominant).
- ***Neyya*** *Bodhisattas* are identified with ***Viriyadhika*** *Bodhisattas* (Effort predominant).

11. Rare is the Appearance of a Buddha.

Kiccho manussapatilabho – Hard it is to be born as a human being.
Kiccham maccana jivitam – Hard is the life of a mortal.
Kiccham saddhammasavanam – Hard it is to hear the True Doctrine.
Kiccho buddhanam uppado – Rare is the appearance of a Buddha.
(***Dhammapada* 182**)

To be born as a **human being** is one of the **rare opportunities**. According to the Buddha, the number of beings who are reborn as humans is like the **dust on his thumbnail**, while the number of beings reborn in the four woeful states is like the whole earth. As an example, just the **krill population** in the Southern Ocean (estimated at 600 trillion) exceeds the human population (6 billion) by a ratio of 100,000:1. Truly it is hard to be born as a human being!

Yet even when a being arises in the world of men, he is liable to die at any moment from the time of conception in the womb up to the end of his lifespan. To stay alive, he has to constantly take care of his body and mind, which consist of the five aggregates. In the **Simile of the Poisonous Snakes** (*Salayatana Samyutta*, *Asivisa Vagga*)**,** the Buddha compares the four elements of the body to four poisonous snakes. The five aggregates are compared to five murderous enemies, while the craving for pleasure is compared to a treacherous friend with a sword waiting to cut off one's head. This parable serves to illustrate that **a mortal's life is full of difficulties**.

After being warned by a **good friend** about these dangers, the person concerned wants to escape from all these dangers. To reach safety, he has to cross a wide river using a **raft** and striving with arms and legs. This way he reaches the **other shore** where he becomes the **noble man**. Here the **good friend** who warns us of the dangers of existence is the Buddha. The wide river is a simile for the floods (*ogha*) that sweep beings into the ocean of *Samsara*. The raft that takes us to safety is the **Noble Eightfold Path.** But it will not take one across the wide river unless one strives with arms and legs, a simile for **intense, mindful** and **continuous effort**. The other shore is ***Nibbana*** and the noble man represents the ***Arahant***.

It is difficult to get the opportunity to hear the True Doctrine. All religions of the world teach their adherents to perform charity (*dana*) and observe its moral code (*sila*). Some religions also teach mental cultivation through the practice of concentration (*samatha*). Such teachings may lead to happy existences in the human, *deva* and *brahma* realms but they only serve to prolong one's existence in *Samasara*, which is full of suffering. There have been such teachings even before the appearance of the Buddha and we have heard them in our past lives. But it is only during a Buddha *Sasana* that one gets the opportunity to hear teachings about the true nature of body and mind especially the noble *dhamma* of *Satipatthana Vipassana* (Foundations of Mindfulness), the practice of which leads one to the realization of Path and Fruition knowledge (*Magga-phala nana*) and *Nibbana*, the cessation of all suffering.

The opportunity to escape from suffering by the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path through the *Satipatthana Vipassana* meditation only comes with the appearance of a Supreme Buddha. For only a **Supreme Buddha** is able teach this **Noble *Dhamma*** to his disciples of the ***Sangha***, who then preserve and propagate it to mankind. Considering the enormous period of time and superhuman efforts to attain Buddhahood after an aspirant is confirmed as a *Bodhisatta*, the **appearance of a Buddha** in the world is very **rare**.

Good Buddhists who now regularly attend talks and meditation lessons where *Satipatthana Vipassana* is taught should consider themselves indeed fortunate, to be able to benefit from the Noble *Dhamma* of the **Buddha** preserved by the ***Sangha*** till the present day. Indeed, the best way one can **honour the Buddha** is to practise this Noble *Dhamma* diligently in order to free oneself from the cycle of *Samsara*. This is because a Buddha appears in the world to fulfill a **vow** he made when he was a *Bodhisatta* -- to teach the Noble *Dhamma* to mankind so that they may be free from suffering.

12. Eight Unfortunate Existences in *Samsara*

The *Dasuttara Sutta* of *Digha Nikaya* and the commentary of the *Anguttara Nikaya* enumerate **eight existences**, which are considered as unfortunate when a Supreme Buddha appears. These eight unfortunate existences in *Samsara* or the cycle of births are:

a) Existence in an abode of continuous suffering (**hell**) and being unable to perform meritorious action, as one is continuously suffering severe and painful tortures.
b) Existence as an **animal** living always in fear and being unable to perform meritorious action, as one cannot perceive what is good or bad.
c) Existence as a ***Peta*** or ghost and being unable to perform meritorious action, as one is continuously suffering from severe thirst and hunger.
d) Existence as an **unconscious being** (*asanna satta*) in an abode of Brahmas and being unable to perform meritorious action or listen to the *Dhamma*, as one lacks consciousness.
e) Existence as a Brahma in the **formless plane** and being unable to see the Buddha and listen to the *Dhamma* because one does not possess the faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue and body.
f) Existence in a **remote border region** which is not accessible to the *Sangha* or other disciples of the Buddha and being unable to perform meritorious action, as one has no opportunity to listen to the *Dhamma*.
g) Existence as a **holder of wrong views** is a very unfortunate existence because one is unable to listen to the *Dhamma* and perform meritorious action, even though one lives in the Middle Country (*Majjhimadesa*) where a Buddha appears and His *Dhamma* reverberates throughout the land.
h) Existence as a **deformed human** or **degraded *deva*** of the *Catumaharajika* realm, whose rebirth consciousness is devoid of the three good roots (***ahetuka***) so that one is unable to understand or practise the *Dhamma*, even though one is living in the Middle Country and does not hold any wrong view.

13. The Fulfillment of the Perfections by *Pacceka* Buddhas, Chief Disciples and Great Disciples

A) Three Types of Buddhas (Enlightened Beings)

The fourfold insight knowledge of the Path (*Magga-nana*) with or without accompaniment of Omniscience (*Sabbannuta-nana*) is called Enlightenment (*Bodhi*). The fourfold insight knowledge of the Path is the realization of the Four Noble Truths. Enlightenment is of three kinds:

i) ***Samma-sambodhi***: Supreme Enlightenment consisting of the fourfold insight knowledge of the Path (*Magga-nana*) with the accompaniment of Omniscience (*Sabbannuta-nana*). It is achieved by oneself without a teacher's help and has the distinctive power of removing mental defilements as well as habitual tendencies (*vasana*) of past existences. The Supremely Enlightened Buddha is called a ***Samma Sambuddha***. The minimum period to accomplish the Perfections (*Paramis*) is four *asankheyyas* and a *lakh* of *kappas* (a *lakh* = 100,000).

ii) ***Pacceka-Bodhi***: Enlightenment consisting of the fourfold insight knowledge of the Path (*Magga-nana*) by oneself without a teacher's help. Such a Buddha is called a ***Pacceka* Buddha** or Lone Buddha– 'an enlightened one who is on his own' because he does not reveal the *Dhamma* or preach it to the people. So he is **alone in enlightenment** because he does not possess the ability to share it with others. The period to accomplish the Perfections (*Paramis*) is two *asankheyyas* and a *lakh* of *kappas*

iii) ***Savaka-Bodhi***: Enlightenment consisting of the fourfold insight knowledge of the Path (*Magga-nana*) achieved only with the help of a teacher. Such a Buddha is called a ***Savaka Buddha*** and refers to the *Arahants* who attained enlightenment as Disciples of the Buddha. The period to accomplish the Perfections (*Paramis*) is one *asankheyya* and a *lakh* of *kappas* for the Chief Disciples while for the great Disciples it is one *lakh of kappas.*

B) The *Pacceka* Buddha

In the hierarchy of enlightened beings, the *Pacceka* Buddha ranks below the *Sammasambuddha* but above the Chief Disciples (*Savaka*). In the Illustrator of Ultimate Meaning, the commentary to the *Khuddakapatha* VI, 42-43, a *Pacceka* Buddha is higher than the Chief Disciples but lower than a *Samma Sambuddha* in terms of greatness of qualities; "*for even several hundred disciples like Sariputta and Moggallana cannot be compared to a hundredth part of a Pacceka Buddha's qualities. But compared to the Samma Sambuddha, even all the Pacceka Buddhas of Jambudipa combined cannot exhibit a fraction of a Fully Enlightened One's qualities*."

Pacceka Buddhas attain enlightenment by themselves but **do not enlighten others**. They comprehend only the essence of **meaning** (*attha*), not the essence of **idea** (*dhamma*) and are unable to put the supramundane *dhamma* into concepts and teach it. However, they possess supernormal powers (***iddhi***) and attainments (***samapatti***) and can influence others indirectly to enter a religious life. In the story of the *Bodhisatta* Sankha in Illustrator VI, 129, it is related that his son Susima approached the *Pacceka* Buddhas at Isipatana and asked for training towards enlightenment. All they could do was to ordain him and train him in the simple essentials of good conduct because they were unable to instruct him in a meditation subject. Eventually he attained enlightenment by himself as a *Pacceka* Buddha.

Regarding the **time of their appearance**, *Suttanipata* Commentary states that *Pacceka* Buddhas arise without having to come to know *Samma Sambuddhas* and at times of the birth of a *Samma Buddha.* Only in times **when there are no *Samma Sambuddhas*** that it is possible to attain *Pacceka* Buddhahood. Many *Pacceka* Buddhas can appear at one time. In *Isigili Sutta* of *Majjhima Niklaya*, it is mentioned that five hundred *Pacceka* Buddhas lived in the caves at **Isigili**, one of the five mountains near Rajagaha. Although this group of *Pacceka* Buddhas is mentioned as living together, it is more for practical considerations and is not connected with their practice towards enlightenment, which has to be acquired individually without instructions from others.

The person who aspires to become a *Pacceka* Buddha, called a ***Pacceka Bodhisatta***, must possess **five qualifications**, namely:

i) Must be a human being
ii) Must be a male person
iii) Must meet with an enlightened person, i.e. Buddha, a *Pacceka* Buddha or an *Arahant*.
iv) The aspirant must have renounced the household life.
v) Must possess wholesome desire (*chanda*) strong enough to aspire for the goal even though he fully knows that he has to suffer much through repeated births, even in woeful states.

C. The *Savaka* Buddhas – Chief Disciples and Great Disciples

The qualifications for the Disciples are: **meritorious act** and **desire.**

- For Ven. Sariputta and Ven. Maha Moggallana, they made their earnest wish for **Chief Discipleship** and were confirmed by Lord **Anomadassin** Buddha, one *asankheyya* of *kappas* and 100,000 *kappas* ago. Thereafter they accomplished the *Paramis* and achieved their desired goals in the present aeon under Lord Gotama Buddha.

- For the **80 eminent male** and **13 eminent female** disciples they aspired to be Great Disciples, **100,000 *kappas*** ago. Each aspirant saw in the company of a Buddha, a particular *Maha Arahant*, whose qualities he/she admired most and whom he/she wished to emulate. Then the aspirant gave alms usually for seven days and expressed the hope of becoming such a *Maha Arahant* in the company of a future Buddha. Thereafter he/she obtained a definite prophecy called ***Niyata-byakarana***, from the existing Buddha. Buddha **Padumuttara** who appeared 100,000 *kappas* ago was the **source of the *Maha Arahants***. Thereafter the aspirants accomplished the *Paramis* and achieved their desired goals in the present aeon during the Lord Gotama Buddha.

14. The Pre-eminent Disciples of the Buddha

In *Samyutta* II, 155, the Buddha had pointed out that the group of *bhikkhus* who followed each of these *Maha Arahants*, possessed the **same special qualifications** as that particular *Maha Arahant*, just as "like attracts like."

Thus in *Anguttara Nikaya* I, 23, we read that the Buddha singled out for honour the **pre-eminent disciples** (*etadagga*) in the particular branches of the *Dhamma*, thereby fulfilling the wish they had made in the past. Some notable personalities are named below together with their field of pre-eminence:

- Sariputta – First Chief Disciple, foremost in wisdom
- Mahamoggallana – Second Chief Disciple, foremost in psychic powers
- Mahakassapa – foremost in ascetic practices
- Mahakaccayana – foremost in exegesis (exposition and analysis)
- Mahakotthita – foremost in knowledge of Discrimination
- Ananda – foremost in wide learning, retentive memory, good behavior, resoluteness, attending to the Buddha
- Upali – foremost in knowledge of the Discipline
- Punna Mantaniputta – foremost in the preaching of the *Dhamma*
- Kumara Kassapa – foremost in brilliant speaking
- Revata Khadiravaniya – foremost among forest recluses
- Anuruddha – foremost in the divine eye or clairvoyance
- Subhuti – foremost of those worthy of offerings
- Sivali – foremost of those who receive offerings
- Maha Kappina – foremost of admonishers of monks
- Bahiya – fastest to win *Arahantship* just on hearing an address, without previous study
- Rahula – foremost among monks anxious for training

For more details about the eminent male and female disciples of the Buddha, the reader should refer to "Pen Portraits – Ninety Three Eminent Disciples of the Buddha" by **C. de Saram**[7].

14. References

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15. Explanatory Notes

Note 1: The word '***abhinna***' is a combination of two words: '*abhi*'= higher and '*nana*'= knowledge. So '*abhinna*' means **higher knowledge** or **super intellect.** The six *abhinnas* are (1) Psychic Powers (*Iddhi-vidha*), (2) Divine Ear (*Dibba-sota*), (3) Penetration of others' minds (*Cittapariya nana* or *cetopariya*), (4) Divine Eye (*Dibba-cakkhu*), (5) Recollection of past lives (*Pubbenivasanussati*), (6) Extinction of cankers (*Asavakkhaya*). The first five knowledges are mundane and can be attained through intense tranquility meditation (*Samatha*) while the last knowledge is supramundane and can only be attained by Insight meditation (*Vipassana*).

Note 2*:* '***Patisambhida nana***' means the Knowledge of Discrimination. There are four *Patisambhidas*, namely:

a) ***Attha-patisambhida*** = Discrimination of meaning: Meaning is a term for the fruit of a cause (*hetu*), in particular the five things, namely, (i) anything conditionally produced, (ii) *nibbana,* (iii) the meaning of what is spoken, (iv) *kamma*-result, and (v) functional consciousness. Understanding of difference in meaning **e.g. suffering, resolution, exertion, non-distraction,** is discrimination of meaning.

b) ***Dhamma-patisambhida*** = Discrimination of law: Law is a term for a condition (*paccaya*). Since a condition is necessary for something to happen, it is therefore called 'law (*dhamma*)', in particular the five things, namely, (i) any cause that produces fruit, (ii) the Noble Eightfold Path, (iii) what is spoken, (iv) what is profitable, and (v) what is unprofitable. Understanding of difference in law **e.g. craving, faith faculty, energy faculty, concentration faculty,** is discrimination of law.

c) ***Nirutti-patisambhida*** = Discrimination of language: This is knowledge of enunciation of language dealing with meaning and law. Understanding of difference in language used in the **four examples** for meaning, and **four examples** for law, is discrimination of language.

d) ***Patibhana-patisambhida*** = Discrimination of perspicuity (clarity or lucidity or non-ambiguity): In the examples given above, there is lucidity in the understanding of **four sorts of meaning**, lucidity in the understanding of **four sorts of law,** lucidity in the understanding of

eight sorts of language. The understanding of the difference in perspicuity is knowledge of the discrimination of perspicuity.

(References: The Path of Purification (*Visuddhimagga*) Chapter XIV, 21 and the Path of Discrimination (*Patisambhidamagga*) Chapters XXV-XXVIII, both treatises translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli)

Note 3: According to the *Puggala-Pannatti* (Designation of Human Types) Chapter IV, 5 and *Anguttara* Book of Fours No. 133, beings who are fortunate to encounter the Buddha *Sasana* or Dispensation, can be classified into four types, namely:

a) ***Ugghatitannu***: the person who comprehends the doctrine at the time of its pronouncement and is said to be **quick in acquiring**. Examples of persons of such superior wisdom are Ven. **Sariputta** who attained the 1st stage of Sainthood immediately upon hearing the first two lines of a four-line stanza uttered by Ven. **Assaji**; Ven. **Maha Moggalana** who attained the 1st stage of Sainthood immediately upon hearing the whole stanza repeated by Ven. Sariputta; Ven. **Bahiya Daruciriya** who attained *Arahantship* immediately upon hearing a brief sermon from the Buddha and was singled out as **foremost** to gain the goal of *Arahantship* by grasping a single sentence.

b) ***Vipancitannu***: the person whose comprehension of the doctrine comes when the meaning of what is briefly uttered is analysed in detail i.e. he **learns by full details**.

c) ***Neyya***: the person to whom comprehension of the doctrine comes by recitation, questioning, and earnest attention and by serving, cultivating and waiting upon lovely friends i.e. he has to be **led on by instructions**.

d) ***Padaparama***: the person to whom comprehension of the doctrine would not come in this life, however much he may hear and bear in mind or recite i.e. **he who learns by heart**, is word-perfect but without understanding it.

Note: In *Abhidhamma*, the first three types of persons are those who are born with the three good roots (***tihetuka***) of non-greed, non-hate, non-delusion while the fourth type person is born with only two good roots (***dvihetuka***) and lacking the root of wisdom or non-delusion.